

REAL ROMANCES OF THE BUSINESS WORLD

THE TEST THAT WON THE MASTER MECHANICS

BY RICHARD SPILLANE.

It is not to be supposed that conditions in the railroad world are as they used to be when Diamond Jim made his rounds and sent in half of a \$100-bill to an official, he desired to sell stuff to, and asked the messenger to tell him that the other half was outside and wanted to see him. They are getting better every year. There is not the looseness, the graft, the favoritism, that once prevailed. The situation to-day is far from ideal, maybe it will be improved greatly when the recommendations of the Interstate Commerce Commission are followed, especially in regard to the purchase of material.

In the Machinery Club and down in Liberty Street, where the salesmen of the great supply houses gather, some queer stories are told of how big orders were obtained and how the fate of this house or that one depended on one single act. There is the case of the Norton injector. Norton is not the name, but it is near enough to serve the purpose in this instance. By quickness of wit, by hazarding all to turn the tables on those who planned to surprise and discomfit him, Norton won the regard of a lot of men without whose good will he might never have achieved fortune and a commanding position in his particular field. It is not a highly woven tale that is woven around him, but it is true and human nature does not change even if conditions do.

Perhaps no one who went to a convention of master mechanics held in the Continental Hotel in Philadelphia had less reason than Norton to believe it was to mark the turning point in his career. He had an injector to show to the delegates, and like all the other men who had wares to display, he rented a room in the hotel and arranged to entertain in the customary manner every man he could induce to inspect his stock. The injector plays a small but important part in the make-up of a locomotive. In the boiler the steam is made, and from the boiler the steam goes out to turn the powerful machinery. At regular intervals the water supply in the boiler must be replenished. The cold water is drawn from the tender by a series of pipes and gradually heated, and when the gauge shows that the water within the boiler is below a proper level the injector comes into play. It drives hot water into the boiler, thus the place of that which has been transformed into steam. In some cases it works automatically; in others by hand. If an injector should fail, a locomotive would be helpless. To shoot water of a proper temperature and of the required amount into the boiler at the proper time is the province of the injector. To inject too much would be to lower the steam pressure unduly. To inject too little would be to risk an explosion.

Norton's injector was a good one but he had not been successful in getting railroads to adopt it. Formerly the master mechanics had more to say about the style injector a locomotive should use than they have to-day. Most of the master mechanics had been firemen and engineers and had their

own fancies. Not infrequently their suggestions as to the kind of injector a locomotive should have depended on the impression the agent or salesman of the injector made upon them.

To Norton that convention was a wedge to obtain business. If he succeeded in winning the good will of a fair number of delegates it meant a fair measure of prosperity. If he failed it would mean a long struggle.

The majority of men go to conventions more for pleasure than for business. Master mechanics are no exception to the rule. To them a convention is more of a frolic or a vacation than a serious gathering. They meet old friends, make new acquaintances and try to forget the clamor of the shop and the turmoil of the roundhouse. Perfunctorily they listen to heavy addresses by more or less able members of the organization and promptly forget most of what has been said by the speakers.

Norton, knowing his men, laid his

plans to gain their attention. He was not rich and the injector in itself was not enough to attract them, but he determined to do well whatever he did. Before the convention he had an earnest talk with the hotel people. He paid a good deal of attention to the selection of the room in which he was to display his machine. Many cause it was a bit out of the way, but Norton was far more solicitous about the quality of cigars, the grades of liquor and wines and the kinds of foodstuffs he was to have in his room than he was about anything else. A sandwich is a sandwich the world over, but to a man from the Far West who rarely sees an oyster except one of the cove variety that comes from a can, an oyster patty served exquisitely is something to remember.

Some men—many of them, in fact—do not know rye whiskey from bourbon, and master mechanics are not supposed to have the most delicate of judgments in matters of this sort, but there are some appreciative palates in the midst of men. There are cigars that delight the senses and make the smoker look upon the giver with grateful eyes, but they cost money and they burn as fast almost as the cheap ones. There are champagnes that mellow the mind and have a bouquet of their own.

With all this care as if he was to have for guests the most discriminating and critical of people, Norton selected his stock of goods, and then when the delegates assembled, he went among them. He was one of many who were seeking to entertain them and win their attention. Occasionally he got one to accept his hospitality. That one was likely to remember it enough to mention it to another. As the convention dragged along he had a decided increase in the number of his callers. The visitors were not slow to realize that the stuff put before them was unusually good.

But all this did not bring business. If Norton directed the attention of one of his callers to the injector, or if the caller felt in duty bound to inspect the display, it did not result in anything further than a promise to consider the machine when they were required. The fine cigars, the choice champagne, the delicious snacks on the sideboard were far more attractive to the men than any old injector that ever was made. They could see an injector any day in the week. They had been handling them, it seemed, all their lives, but they never had been up against such good free eating and drinking and smoking before, and they were much too practical to waste any more valuable time on common machinery than politeness to the host necessitated.

There is a delight in entertaining those who are appreciative. The men who accepted Norton's invitation certainly were appreciative, if the way they waded into his supplies was any criterion. But when expensive entertaining is provided to attract business, and there is no business forthcoming, it is likely to become a trifle irksome to the man who is paying the bill.

Norton saw his money going and the convention drawing to a close, and perhaps he felt a bit sorry for himself. Then, suddenly, a situation developed that put him on his mettle. One of the delegates, who had enjoyed his cigars and his liquors to the fullest, came to him to warn him of what a lot of the men planned to do to have sport with him.

"Some one said you were putting up the best stuff of any of the supply men here," he said, "and told what he thought you had spent for cigars, for champagne and for whiskey. Others chimed in and said they never had anything to equal it. Then one proposed that just as soon as the convention adjourned the whole gang would swoop down on you and eat and drink and smoke you out of house and home. You know how the boys are. They think it is a big joke. When they've cleaned up everything you've got they'll guy the life out of you. I'm sorry for you, old man, but they're passing the word, and I guess you're in for it."

Norton realized in an instant what all this portended. If that wild bunch of railroaders succeeded in making him ridiculous he would be remembered for all time by them as the man they made the butt of their joke. To solicit business from them thereafter would be to revive the memory of how they had made sport of him. He did not have much capital, but he determined to risk it all if necessary then and there. Thanking the man who had brought the news to him, he hurriedly made preparations for the conspirators. He went to the hotel people and ordered so many baskets of champagne that he astonished the manager. Then he purchased all the fine cigars that were obtainable in the neighborhood. The chef got orders to be ready to meet any demand made for foodstuffs. Enough whiskey and other liquors was bought to meet the most extreme needs.

The baskets of champagne were stacked up until the walls of the room were hidden from view. All the wine coolers obtainable were brought into requisition, and then tubs with cracked ice were filled with more bottles. The boxes of expensive cigars were opened, so that there should be no delay in the serving of them. When everything was ready, Norton felt satisfied.

Listening to dry speeches or cheering good ones is thirsty work at any time. It is particularly so when you have been to the hotel people and ordered so many baskets of champagne that they have larking. Those of them who had not been to Norton's room to try his stuff had their thirst sharpened by the stories they had heard from the others. A lot of them were afraid if they did

not get in early they would not know whether what they had heard was true or false. They wanted to sample the goods.

They wanted, too, to be in when the supply gave out, so they could have fun with the innocent man who had been spreading such expensive stuff before a lot of mechanics.

Out of the convention room they swooped. When they got to the corridor some of them began to run. By the time the leaders reached the door of Norton's room the others were in full chase. It was well that Norton's room was big. It was well, too, that there was an outlet through the adjoining room. Norton had waited ready. So soon as the first who entered could make known their desires they were served. Then they were asked to make way for others. Norton worked like a Trojan. So did each of the waiters. The host was beaming. He let the visitors know that he was delighted to see them. It was good of them to come to him in such number. Why had not they come before? They drank and they took cigars or took a bite of something to eat, and made room for those behind who were pressing to get up to the dining line.

The waiters poured and poured and poured, and when they were tired they handed glasses and bottles over to the crowd and let them help themselves. More baskets were opened. More dozens of bottles were put deep in the ice to cool.

Outside those who had not been able to get in were becoming anxious in the extreme. They had some idea of how those ahead were wading into the stuff and they feared a sudden bubbling supply was coming. They struggled to get in, and when they succeeded their fears were banished. There was a bottle for each and every

one of them—two bottles, three bottles, more if necessary. Soon every man from the convention had been served. Then they had to begin all over again. But the time they were wondering when Norton's stock would give out. They had begun to appreciate that the joke was not on him and that they were not going to josh him as they had proposed. Maybe the champagne had a good deal to do with the light in which they now considered Norton. He had not appealed to them particularly before. Of course, some of them had smoked with him and had a drink with him and had talked about how well he had entertained them, but this thing of having enough champagne on hand to drown the whole convention and enough cigars to the finest quality to supply every man with all his pockets would hold, was a novelty. And he was not ostentatious about it, either. Apparently he was delighted to have them and only was sorry that there were not more of them.

The men who had proposed the raid on Norton and the ridicule of him after his supplies had been exhausted, now slipped him on the back and made the announcement that Norton was a good fellow. Everybody agreed with him and gave voice to the fact. Norton hid his embarrassment by seeing that his guests wanted for nothing. From that time on there was no question of Norton's popularity with that crowd.

The fate of a business house depends sometimes on a single act. Norton's injector might have succeeded even if he had not made the sacrifice he did that last day of the master mechanics' convention, but it is doubtful. What is certain, however, is that the men who swooped down upon him in a roasting spirit that meant a ridicule fully as bad as hostility left him room feeling he was a mighty good fellow.

When the men also, in that from a business standpoint Norton never had reason to regret the money he spent in that day's entertaining. The master mechanics never forgot him or his injector. That accounts in part for the growth and success of Norton, and for the fact that when the International Steam Pump Company was formed the

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Buena Vista Social News

[Special to The Times-Dispatch.]
Buena Vista, Va., March 18.—The third of the series of plays which are being given by the Dramatic Club of the Southern Seminary, will be given next Monday evening, at which time "The Widow" will be presented. H. R. Mills spent several days in Washington this week. Mrs. A. C. Mohr and Miss Mohr, of Chicago, are the guests of Mrs. W. B. Frickard. Dr. Yokely, who has been attending the Mardi Gras in New Orleans, returned home Sunday. D. H. Rucker, Jr., of Hampton, spent the week-end with his brother, A. M. Rucker. W. T. Paxton, who has been spending some time in Richmond, returned home Saturday. C. L. Graham is spending several days in Richmond. Mrs. Frank High, of Roanoke, is the guest of her mother, Mrs. P. W. Brown. Mrs. G. H. Ballie, of Canton, N. C., who was called here by the illness and death of her father, A. H. Thompson, returned to her home Tuesday. Mr. D. McKee and Dr. G. T. Divers spent Wednesday in Roanoke.

Eat and Get Thin

This is turning an old phrase face about, but modern methods of reducing fat have made this revision possible. If you are overfat and also averse to physical exertion, and likewise fond of the table, and still want to reduce your excess flesh several pounds, do this: Go to your drugstore for the Marmola Co., 108 Farmer Bldg., Detroit, Mich., and give him (or send them) 75 cents. For this modest amount of money the drugstore will put you in the way of satisfying your ambition for a nice, trim, slim figure. He will hand you a large case of Marmola Prescription Tablets (composed in accordance with the famous Marmola Prescription), one of which you must take after each meal and at bedtime until you begin to lose your fat at the rate of 12 to 18 ounces a day. That is all. Just go on eating what you like, leave exercising to the athletes, but take your little tablet faithfully, and without a doubt that flabby flesh will quickly take unto itself wings, leaving behind it your natural self, neatly clothed in firm flesh and trim muscles.

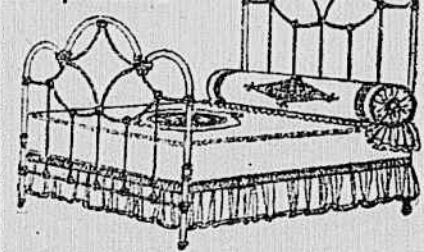
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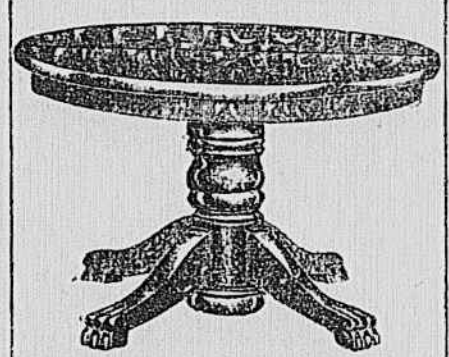
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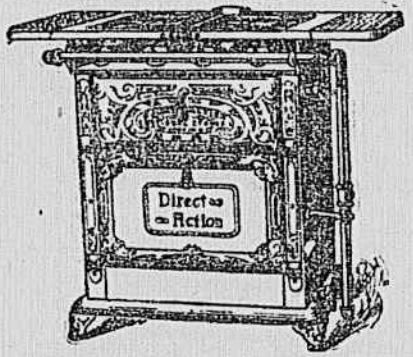


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